1: Honigmann E-5 (1943-1945) 1949 ND12 Nahane ND12

137 occurs at the higher elevations. Along the rivers and creeks, as well as in the forest, there is a profusion of red willow. Also interspersed in the forest are patches of quaking aspen (locally called poplar), birch, and cottonwood. The area contains many edible berries, including the strawberry, soapberry, low and high bush cranberry, raspberry, and blueberry. Along dry sloughs there is often a profusion of coarse grass, while niggerheads are found in an occasional swamp.

● 136 Animal life is quite abundant. Represented are large game animals such as the moose, woodland caribou, sheep, and goat and fur-bearing mammals like the lynx, mink, wolverine, otter, fox, coyote, wolf, beaver, and marten. Deer are rare. In the high mountains gopher and groundhog are numerous. The ubiquitous red squirrel is heard chattering everywhere and the spruce forests are overrun with the small trails worn by the feet of the Arctic hare (locally called rabbit). Fish are generally abundant in the lakes, mainly lake trout, whitefish, and jackfish (or pike). In the rivers the principal species are trout, grayling (sometimes called bluefish), and sucker.

The mosquito is a plague until the middle of August; the small "no-see-um" becomes a nuisance at about the time when the mosquito disappears and remains until late October. The gray mouse is a household pest whose numbers foil any attempt at eradication. Birds include the robin, crow, hoot owl, whiskey jack (or Canada jay), and various winter species like the grosbeak. There are also such fowl as the duck, goose, ptarmigan, willow grouse, and spruce hen. The two latter species are sometimes collectively referred to by the Indians as "chicken," although a distinction is recognized between them.

[825]

101 131 619 The name "Kaska" is the conventional term adopted by anthropologists to designate a number of linguistically and culturally related Athapaskan Indian bands or tribes living in the area of northern British Columbia, southern Yukon Territory, and Northwest Territories in Canada.[1] The present monograph is the result of work done with four of these tribes, but does not include the Espato-tena, who dwell in the Northwest Territories, east of the Rocky Mountains and are ethnographically unknown. The term Kaska is largely synonymous with the less satisfactory designation, Nahani, which, although formerly used by the Kaska to refer to neighboring Indian groups, is not employed as a term of reference within the society.

The four tribes under discussion are locally identified with particular geographical regions, which are in turn definable by the rivers and lakes constituting their main drainage channels. Except possibly in British Columbia, where trap lines are now formally registered, the boundaries between tribal units are not precisely recognized by the members of any tribe. Figure 2 shows the locations of the four Kaska tribes and their hunting and trapping districts, although only the second two listed below call themselves Kaska.

1. The Frances Lake Indians, the most northern tribe, live around Frances Lake, Simpson Lake, and the upper Frances River.[2] Their country extends from the Pelly River watershed on the northwest to the Mackenzie Mountains in the east.

[1] Osgood, *The Distribution of the Northern Athapaskan Indians* (1936), 13.

[2] The Albees on their walk up the Frances River in 1942 found the first signs of Frances Lake Indian camping grounds above the middle canyon of that stream. Albee and Albee, *Family Afoot in the Yukon Wilds* (1942) 614.

2: Teit E-5 (1912-1915) 1917
ND12 Nahane ND12

KASKA TALES.[1]

BY JAMES A. TEIT.

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PREFACE.

THE following collection of tales or traditions is from the Kaska of the northern interior of British Columbia. The Kaska and Tahltan are closely related tribes of the Nahani division of the Athapascan stock, and occupy territories adjacent to each other. The Tahltan inhabit the whole region of the upper Stikine River, and extend easterly to Dease Lake and River, where they meet the Kaska, who claim the country from there down to the Liard. The Tahltan are thus chiefly on the Pacific drainage slope, and the Kaska altogether on the Arctic slope. Owing to their location, the Tahltan have an abundance of salmon in their country, while the Kaska have none. Both tribes live

[1] The present collection of Kaska tales, together with another one of Tahltan tales, was collected by Mr. J. A. Teit in the seasons of 1912 and 1915 in the region of Stikine River, British Columbia. These two seasons of field-work were devoted to a general ethnological investigation of the Tahltan and Kaska Indians, under the auspices of the Geological Survey of Canada. The present publication embraces the mythological results of the trips. Other aspects of the ethnology collected by Mr. Teit will be published by the Geological Survey from time to time in the form of special monographs. To facilitate the appearance of Mr. Teit's Tahltan and Kaska tales, the Geological Survey of Canada has authorized its Division of Anthropology to intrust their publication to the American Folk-Lore Society. — E. SAPIR, Head of Division of Anthropology, Geological Survey of Canada.

2: Teit E-5 (1912-1915) 1917
ND12 Nahane ND12

101 Both tribes live
[224] chiefly by hunting and trapping, but the Kaska depend more on the chase than do the Tahltan. Large game-animals are abundant, consisting of moose, caribou, sheep, goat, and bear. Marmots are plentiful in certain parts, and buffalo are said to have been fairly numerous at one time in the more eastern sections of the country.

101 The Kaska are entirely surrounded by Athapascan tribes, while the Tahltan are neighbors of tribes of two other stocks; viz., the Tlingit to the northwest and west, and the Niska and Kitksan tribes of the Tsimshian stock to the southwest. To the south the Sikani, Carrier, and Chilcotin tribes of the Athapascan stock separate the Tahltan and Kaska from the Shuswap and Lillooet, the nearest tribes of the interior Salish. Owing largely to their position, the Tahltan had a great deal of intercourse with the Tlingit, much more than with any other people. Intercourse and trading were chiefly by way of Stikine River. Trade was in the hands of the Tlingit of Wrangell and vicinity, who annually transported goods by canoe up the river to the head of canoe navigation, a little above Telegraph Creek and close to the headquarters of the Tahltan. The people of the latter tribe acted as middlemen in passing coast products inland, and inland products coastward. The main trade-route between the far east (the Mackenzie valley and the plains) and the Pacific coast in this part of British Columbia lay through the Tahltan and Kaska territory, and there is evidence of a number of cultural features having penetrated a long distance in both directions along that route. Here, as in other parts of the west, the main trade-routes lay as nearly east and west as the physical features of the country allowed; while other routes running north and south within the interior were unimportant, notwithstanding the fact that the nature of the country generally was favorable for travel and intercourse.

487 It may be expected that dissemination of tales has occurred chiefly along the main trade-routes, where intercourse between the tribes was most frequent and closest. Hence throughout the interior, dissemination of tales has followed east and west lines rather than north and south. As the same conditions as to routes prevailed in the southern interior as in the northern, it seems probable that a number of the incidents in tales of the Tahltan and Kaska which correspond with those in tales of the interior Salish have not passed directly from Athapascan to Salish tribes, or *vice versâ*, but have reached both from the same eastern and western sources,—chiefly, it seems, the latter.

177 The Tahltan assert that in the old trading-rendezvous on the upper Stikine, members of the two tribes associated there for weeks together, and that one of the features of meeting was story-telling. Tahltan *raconteurs* told their stories one day, and Tlingit told theirs the following day. Sometimes they thus told stories turn about for

Blankets

352 Blankets and bedding for lying on consisted of all kinds of large or hairy skins sometimes sewed together, caribou, moose, bear, goat, sheep (caribou, bear and sheep most commonly used). Buffalo was used long ago before they became extinct in Tahltan country. All kinds of robes were used as covering.

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CEREMONIAL AND DANCING CLOTHING

292 294 531 Every one aimed to dress in his or her best at all gatherings, feasts, dances, celebrations and ceremonial affairs. The clothes worn by some were merely Tahltan clothes of a fancy kind, viz., the best a person had as to newness, cleanness and richness of ornamentation. Most people had some garments of good quality on which considerable labor had been expended in fancy work, and some pieces exhibited the best art of the tribe in quill work, bead work and other ornamentation. These garments were kept for holidays and special occasions. However, most of the ceremonial clothing was of Tlingit type, and a great deal of it was procured ready made from the Tlingit. I did not try to get particulars regarding this class of clothing as it does not really belong to the Tahltan culture. Chief among this kind of clothing may be mentioned the so-called Chilcat blanket. All the wealthiest Tahltan acquired blankets of this kind from the Tlingit, which were used by them on ceremonial occasions. A kind of apron or skirt and a kind of shirt or coat, all of similar materials and weaves were also in use. Some cloaks or mantles and capes of Tlingit manufacture were also used; also short leggings with horizontal fringes, belts, necklaces and many kinds of head dresses. Among the latter may be mentioned the North Coast head-dress set with sea-lion whiskers, having a carved mask in front and a train of ermine skins behind. These were used by men.

439 292

292 294 531 Blue woolen blankets and cloaks bordered with red cloth and ornamented with pearl buttons or with shells became very common in later days. Sometimes the buttons were arranged so as to form realistic figures of animals, etc. They were used by both sexes. Among what seems to have been head wear of their own manufacture were fur caps and headbands of fur and occasionally of embroidered leather, some having pendants of skin fringes set with feathers in various fashions. (See Nat. Mus. specimens Nos 28, 29, 30, 31, 32.) There were also different kinds of caps made of red and other cloth also decorated in various ways

Strength and endurance, especially in men, were considered very desirable and of more importance than the stature and shape of body. Tall men were considered good looking, but not equal to short men for strength and endurance. Some tall men were very good walkers but short men were better than tall men as workers and packers. They could carry heavier loads without becoming fatigued. Men who were skilful hunters, good-tempered and of kindly disposition were most desired by women. These qualities were more considered by women than good looks, etc. Some men considered a light smooth skin preferable to fine features. Some would say, "That woman has a beautiful face and fine features but her skin is too rough". It is said that women (or all persons) of the Raven phratry had rougher skins than women or people of the Wolf phratry. This is said to be owing to their descent from Big Raven who like the raven bird had rough skin, especially on the legs. A very wide head or a very flat nose was considered ugly. People having these features were said to resemble slaves. A man would say of a wide-face, flat-nosed person, "That woman is ugly; she resembles a slave".

832 [581] [616]

SUBSISTENCE--VARIETIES AND PREPARATION OF FOOD

The food of the Tahltan consisted of flesh of animals and of fish supplemented by some vegetable food during the summer season. Animal flesh especially was the chief subsistence of the tribe, but fish was also important. In comparison with the Plateau Tribes the use of roots and berries was insignificant. Shell fish taken from salt or fresh water were not eaten. It is said they were fairly abundant in one large lake near the head of Nass River, but in all other parts of the Tahltan country were exceedingly scarce. There were no domestic animals excepting the dog, and no agriculture was practised, except for a period of years the cultivation of tobacco.

262 [23] 241 244]

The flesh of the following animals was considered good food; the caribou, moose, buffalo, sheep, goat, bear (of all kinds), lynx, beaver, marmot, porcupine, ground squirrels, and hare or rabbit.

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Tree squirrels and muskrats were eaten occasionally especially if food was scarce but they were not considered very good food. Squirrels did not have enough fat.

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The flesh of the otter, marten, mink, fisher, wolverine, wolf, dog, bush rat, and mouse was not eaten. Only in cases of direct necessity did people eat flesh of these animals, and the last resource was the dog. Of birds, grouse of all kinds, ducks of all kinds, geese, swans and a few other large birds were eaten.

Fresh water fish of all kinds such as salmon, trout, grayling, white fish, pike etc., were eaten.

No reptiles and insects of any kind were eaten. Any person who ate anything unusual or different from the food eaten by all was laughed at and spoken about. /Ed: this section was not completed/.

TRAVEL, TRANSPORTATION AND TRADE

BOATS

[481]
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Travel was nearly all on foot and this still continues to be the principal method of locomotion. It seems that formerly water travel was not very important to the Tahltan. According to tradition there were no canoes or at least no good canoes long ago. Bark canoes were used in a few places where crossings were made, also on some parts of sluggish streams, and on some lakes. These canoes were made for temporary use only and were seldom used excepting for short periods. They were never used more than a single season and usually the parties who made them threw them away when through with them just as people do rafts. They were roughly made of bark of large trees (varieties uncertain) peeled in the summer and sewed and fastened with wattup, spruce roots and light withes. They were so scarce and have been out of use so long that very little is now remembered about them. It is said they were of about the same shape as the skin canoes now used by the Kaska, but were of cruder make than the bark and skin canoes made by tribes to the east and north. Very few large trees having suitable bark for canoe covering are to be found in the Tahltan country excepting within the coast or Cascade Range. Some informants claim that long ago even bark canoes were not made and rafts alone were used. These were of poles lashed together with withes. It seems at least that in ancient days rafts were much more used than bark canoes and in some parts of the Tahltan country they were the only means employed for crossing of rivers and

881 of a black color, so her skin would be smooth and soft. Some rubbed the entire body including the privates. She blew water out of her mouth, catching it in her hands and rubbing it over her body. At the same time she prayed and said, "May I obtain good things as easily [844] and quickly as I do this". She put smooth stones down the neck of her robe and when they dropped out she uttered the wish that she would always be delivered of child easily.

[136] She caught some lice and put them on a chip of wood or bark which she set afloat on water. At the same time she said "May lice leave me, and may I have none in after years".

She carried a load of wood (or anything) and whilst carrying it, prayed, "May I be strong and able to carry heavy burdens".

She attached stones to the ends of her hair and prayed her hair would grow long.

She made quick movements with her body and arms, etc., and prayed, "May I be able to move thus quickly when I become old". When a girl lit the fire she did so as quickly as possible, meanwhile praying, "May I always be able to light fires quickly even when I am old". She walked fast and ran fast sometimes, praying, "May I thus be able to walk and run fast when I am old." She picked berries quickly, picked needles

6: Honigmann E-5 (1943-1945)1954 ND12 Nahane ND12

132 sun. With the onset of evening the heat declines so that the nights are cool. Frosts begin in August. In winter periods of extreme cold occur but the season is relatively windless, a condition that helps to make the low temperatures bearable. In 1943–44 and again in January, 1947, the mercury is said to have approached 70 degrees below zero Fahrenheit. The winter of 1944–45 was described as relatively mild, the coldest day being about 55 degrees below zero.[7] The winter climate is greatly influenced by the Polar Continental air masses of the interior. When these cross the eastern mountains they bring the particular quality of cold which Indians describe as coming from the east or northeast. Snowfall is apt to be heavy, beginning in late September and remaining in the mountains until late June.

136 Like other parts of the North American taiga, the Cassiar remains well stocked with
137 game and fur bearers. The coniferous forest of spruce and jackpine, interspersed with dense clumps of willow, quaking aspen,[8] birch, and cottonwood (*liard*), proves hospitable to the fox, ground hog, gopher (marmot), lynx, mink, marten, otter, weasel, porcupine, muskrat, rabbit, red squirrel, wolf, coyote, mouse, and beaver. Amid the spruces the ground is covered with a luxuriant blanket of sphagnum moss attractive to caribou. Snakes are apparently absent, though not unfamiliar to the Indians. Patches of raspberry, saskatoon, strawberry, cranberries (low and high bush), and soap berry are inviting to grizzly, brown, and black bears. Jenness reports native traditions of buffalo
136 having been plentiful in the Kaska country during the precontact period.[9] Is he perhaps influenced by Indian tales of people running across huge "elephant" bones and teeth, probably belonging to some prehistoric species of dinosaur?[10] The available evidence indicates the range of wood buffalo to have been restricted to the east of the Fort Nelson River.[11] Various authors as well as local Indians agree that at some time in the past moose were lacking in the country. According to Pike, "twenty-five years ago there were few moose along the Liard, and the animal was unknown to the Indians hunting to the westward of Dease Lake. Then there began to be frequent rumours of a big track seen in the snow, and momentary glimpses of a beast whose size varied according to the fancy of the startled hunter. Then a young brave stood face to face with a moose and slew it; and the Cascas discovered that a new animal . . . had invaded their country."[12] George Adsit, a now deceased, long-term resident of the Cassiar, told the writer

[7] Personal communication. According to Pike, "the winters in the Cassiar are mild in comparison to the climate in the same latitude to the eastward of the Rockies, the warm Chinook winds from the Pacific penetrate the coast ranges, modifying the intensity of the cold to such an extent that there is usually a thaw with rainfall during some part of the winter." (Pike, *Through the Subarctic Forest* [1896], 99–100.) According to information personally received from George Adsit, long-term Cassiar resident, the Chinook does not blow until April and therefore has no effect on winter temperatures.

[8] This species of tree is especially found as a second growth in burned areas, where the rose bay or fireweed also flourishes. For an interesting account of the latter plant, lately returned to London, England, after 300 years, see Vadebuncoeur, *Flower of the Blitz* (1946).

[9] Jenness, *Indians of Canada* (1932), 397.

[10] Sternberg, *Canadian Dinosaurs* (1945).

[11] Allen, *American Bisons* (1876).

[12] Pike, *Through the Subarctic Forest* (1896), 89. Williams also reports the former absence of moose in the Cassiar in his *Game Trails in British Columbia* (1925), 256.

6: Honigmann E-5 (1943-1945)1954 ND12 Nahane ND12

that the Kaska Indians had known moose "a long, long time ago." Subsequently the animal disappeared and when it returned the people had lost the art of hunting the animal. Informants spoke of aboriginal techniques for hunting moose, indicating that the animal entered the region prior to the beginning of acculturation. Linguistically it is interesting to compare the Kaska word for moose, gatɔ or ketɔ, with the terms kǫlǫn and ulǫn used by the Fort Nelson Slave. Elk and deer were more certainly originally absent in the Cassiar and have only recently begun to appear west of the Rockies. Thus a deer was killed about seven miles southeast of the confluence of the Liard and Frances rivers about 1928. In the summer of 1944 Indians expressed great interest in what were presumed to be deer tracks encountered in the soft shoulders of the Alaska Highway near Lower Post. Similar tracks appeared along the Liard near the confluence of the Frances River. Perhaps the highway has been responsible for the animal's intensified westerly migration. According to Williams, "the most northerly herd of wapiti (elk) is resident in the vicinity of Tuchodi Lake," the source of the Smith River.[12] Weasel and skunk are also reported to be recent arrivals in the district. Wild fowl include grouse, spruce (fool) hens, ptarmigan, owl, eagle, crow, swan, loon, and a relatively small number of geese and duck. In summer Lower Post harbors a small colony of swallows but they originally came from England. Rivers and lakes contain grayling sucker, trout, whitefish, loche (ling), and pike. Watson Lake, 23 miles northwest of Lower Post, once provided an important source of whitefish for the Indians.[14] Salmon are known to run in the Stikine, Pelly, and Ross rivers but are absent from the region of which we speak.

A geographically interesting feature of the region is the hot springs that erupt about 100 miles east of Lower Post. These warm, sulphurous waters have long excited interest in the Cassiar, giving rise to stories of hidden and mysterious "tropical valleys."[13] The writer visited one of these springs located about a mile west of the bridge where the Alaska Highway makes its easternmost crossing of the Liard. The vegetation is indeed more luxuriant near the pool of warm water and photographs prove that the springs resist freezing in winter. The area of such exuberant growth, however, is extremely circumscribed.[16]

KASKA TRIBES AND THEIR NEIGHBORS

Sometime within the past 20,000 years man probably first set foot in the Cassiar. The immediate point from which those early settlers had migrated presumably lay somewhere to the northwest. At a somewhat greater distance in time and space the forefathers

[12] Williams, *Geological Reconnaissance along the Alaska Highway from Fort Nelson, British Columbia, to Watson Lake, Yukon* (1944), 3.

[14] Named after a Yorkshireman who settled there and married an Indian woman. Watson is dead but in 1945 Mrs. Watson continued to live near the airdrome at the Lake with her daughters, a son-in-law (a Beaver Indian *métis*), and two grandchildren.

[13] Johnston, *Gold Placers of Dease Lake Area, Cassiar District, B. C.* (1926), 38A; Godsell, *Romance of the Alaska Highway* (1944), 86-92.

[16] See also Williams, *Geological Reconnaissance along the Alaska Highway from Fort Nelson, British Columbia, to Watson Lake, Yukon* (1944), 31.